



The contrary of a truth can never be demonstrated - Thomas Aquinas

Confident Christians

Modern Day False Messiahs

When asked by His disciples on the Mount of Olives what signs would indicate that His second coming and the end of the age was near, Jesus began His dialog in Matthew 24:4 with the simple statement, "See to it that no one misleads you." The warnings about spiritual deception are repeated over and over again in Matthew's famous passage, with Jesus zeroing in on the fact that false prophets and false Christs would arise and deceive even those born again, if that were possible.

The alarm bells sounded two-thousand years ago by Jesus are growing increasingly more relevant as each year goes by. For example, in 2006, MSNBC and various newspapers around the country carried the story of a sixty-year old Puerto Rican man named Jose Luis de Jesus Miranda who claims he is Jesus Christ in the flesh. His followers call him everything from apostle, to daddy, to Jesus Christ. Miranda firmly believes he is the reincarnation of Jesus and has gathered around him a large faithful following who lavish upon him money, gifts, and adoration, which he appears to gleefully accept.

The popularity and open acceptance of Miranda is easy to understand when one comprehends the message this self-proclaimed messiah is preaching. According to Miranda, there is no sin, no hell, and no devil, with Satan having been done away with over two thousand years ago. Miranda promises his followers – who refer to themselves as the "super race" – that they have been predestined to go to Heaven no matter what they do here on earth. All other churches spread lies and deceit, so Miranda has stated that his mission is to do away with all of them and has proclaimed, "I'm leading the greatest reformation that has ever happened."¹

When challenged by the press and others to duplicate the miracles of Christ, Miranda gently ignores the requests and points to the church he says he is building as proof of who he claims to be. However, not everyone is enamored with Miranda, with a number of former devotees and family members of current proselytes lobbying hard against his activities. As is the case with many cults, a string of broken families and promises is the wake being produced by this modern day false messiah.

"For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ, and will mislead many. Then if anyone says to you, 'Behold here is the Christ, or 'There He is,' do not believe him.'" The prophetic words spoken by Jesus in Matthew 24:5,23 continue to ring true today as counterfeit Christs keep on appearing and deluding those who have no spiritual foundation to rest upon. Further, cults, false religions, and heretical groups springing out of evangelical Christianity paint distorted pictures of the Jesus carefully documented in the inspired Word of God, and leave many wondering if the real Jesus can ever be known.

Does the real identity of Jesus matter? Does it make a difference in the life of a person if they believe Jesus is just a created being, only one of the many prophets God has sent forth down through the centuries, or just one of many manifestations of the "Christ" that has appeared through numerous different personalities over time? If it does matter, how can one go about determining the actual and true identity of Christ, and also recognize the false Christs that Jesus warns about?

It can be shown that there is no more important thing in this life than believing in the real Jesus, with severe and eternal consequences being the only end result for those who follow anyone other than the

¹ Mariah Blake, "Jesus Redux", [http://www.miaminewtimes.com/Issues/2006-02-09/news/feature_full.html].

true Son of God. Separating the authentic and historical Jesus from the inventions of man's own desires and the distortions deliberately constructed by the god of this world can only be done by thoroughly examining God's Word and discarding anything that contradicts its portrayal of Jesus. This exercise is not an easy one, and it grows ever harder as the enemy of Christ's true identity continues to deceive everyone he can. As A.W. Tozer has observed, "So skilled is error at imitating truth, that the two are constantly being mistaken for each another. It takes a sharp eye these days to know which brother is Cain and which Abel."²

The Protective Nature of Identity

Much, if not all, of logic rests upon four foundational laws:

- The law of non-contradiction – something cannot be “A” and “non-A” at the same time and in the same sense
- The law of the excluded middle – something must be either “A” or “non-A”
- The law of rational inference – for example, all men are mortal, John is a man, therefore John is a mortal
- The law of identity – allows man to say “A” is really “A”

The last law is particularly important – the law of identity. Attributed to Aristotle's teaching, but not really becoming widely known in theology camps until Thomas Aquinas appeared on the scene, the law of identity makes rational communication among human beings possible. For example, if a man tells his wife that he is going to the gym, the law of identity is what keeps his wife from thinking that he is going to the movies.

In addition to providing for sane communication between mankind, the law of identity acts as a wonderful protective mechanism in that it keeps people, for example, from drinking a bottle labeled “rat poison” because they don't mistake the container to be a bottle of lemonade. But the law of identity can only do so much. It only protects people insofar as they choose to believe the reality of what something is. The truth is that something is what something is no matter how much a person thinks it is something else or how badly they want to believe that it is something else, or for that matter that it could one day even be something else. Things can change shapes and forms, but rarely does a thing change its actual essence or identity. Atypical radical breaks do exist, such as when a sperm and egg unite to become an entirely new thing (a zygote), but more often than not, change is more like a block of ice becoming liquid or gas – it still continues to be H₂O.

It cannot be stressed how important it is in this life to comprehend the true identity of what something is. But as important as the law of identity is in everyday life, it is absolutely crucial in the spiritual realm. If one approaches most any non-Christian person and asks, "Who is God?", there is a near perfect chance of their response beginning with, "I like to think of God as ..." It is as if they can somehow realistically swap the true identity of the Creator with one that fits what they want/believe/hope God to be. Needless to say, this cannot be done. God is Who He is. His identity is unchanging and does not conform to what mankind thinks Him to be or what they want to reduce Him to.

Although there are numerous reasons why the law of identity is critical in the spiritual life of man, three of the most important reasons have to do with salvation, the relationship between God and man, and the very concept of God and how He is viewed by those He created.

² A.W. Tozer, “How to Avoid Serious Error”, in *That Incredible Christian* (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1964), 50.

Jesus' Personal Application of the Law of Identity

Jesus had just finished rescuing the adulterous woman from the Pharisees in John 8 when He stopped to communicate a critical truth to the disbelieving religious leaders that underlined the importance of the law of identity. "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am *He*, you will die in your sins." (John 8:24). Jesus is telling them that, quite literally, if they did not believe that He was who He was, they would suffer eternal consequences.

This was not something the religious leaders wanted to hear then, and two thousand years later, it is not what many people want to believe today. But Jesus' words are as valid today as when He first spoke them. Understanding, believing in, and accepting the real Christ – comprehending His true identity and acting upon that truth – is what Jesus says causes the actual salvation experience to occur in the life of the believer. Any other belief, no matter how sincere it is, falls short and places a person in spiritual jeopardy. This is the first and most critical reason that understanding and believing in the true identity of Jesus matters. As A.W. Tozer has commented, "To believe on Christ savingly means to believe the right things about Christ. There is no escaping this."³

The Key Need for the God-Man

One of the silver linings running through all cults and false religions is the denial of the divinity of Jesus. Some cults and false religions are very black and white about this error, while others are much more subtle. But they all in some form or fashion strip Jesus of the glory that He shared with God the Father before the world was, and the glory that He has now regained following His resurrection from the dead. Why is this error so deadly?

First, as was demonstrated above, one must believe the right things about the true identity of Jesus to be saved. Secondly, it dismisses the need for the nature that allows Him to stand in the gap between God and man and intercede for the lost souls of mankind. Job bemoaned the lack of such a person when he said, "For He is not a man as I am that I may answer Him, that we may go to court together. There is no umpire between us, who may lay his hand upon us both." (Job 9:32-33).

Only the God-man, Jesus Christ, can fill this void. As man, He understands mankind's plight, although He Himself escaped the condemnation that sin has brought to every human naturally born. As God, He represents the Holy and righteous Judge over all humanity. Only He as the God-man can adequately represent both parties just as 1 Timothy 2:5-6 says, "For there is one God, *and* one mediator also between God and men, *the* man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony *given* at the proper time." This is one of the keys to why Christ's true identity is so critical to understand and accept.

A God that Acts

A third reason why the real identity of Jesus matters is that it clearly demonstrates how God is actively involved with His creation, cares about those He brought into existence, and has supernaturally worked to provide for mankind's salvation. The true identity of Jesus Christ stands in stark opposition to deism, which is a view of God that says there is an eternal God who created everything out of nothing, but since then has left man on his own in this world and does not interfere in any way with what He originally created. This concept of God is one of aloofness and is far from the God portrayed in Scripture who notices when a sparrow falls to the ground and runs to the prodigal son who is making his way back

³ A.W. Tozer, "How Important is Creed", in *That Incredible Christian* (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1964), 22.

home. Deism also says that miracles do not occur because God either cannot or will not intervene in nature.⁴

The real identity of Jesus refutes deism in two powerful ways – by demonstrating the miraculous nature of God and showcasing His personal loving-kindness for man.

A God and Messiah of Miracles

Deism claims that miracles do not occur. Yet, all of the real Jesus' life was marked by miracles. The prophet Isaiah foretold how the very birth of Christ would be a miracle when he wrote in Isaiah 7:14: "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel." Hundreds of years later, this prediction was fulfilled when the angel Gabriel visited Mary and told her that she would give birth to the Son of God. Mary's response to the angel in Luke 1:34 spelled out Isaiah's prophecy when she asked, "How can this be since I am a virgin?" Jesus' very beginnings were marked by the miraculous intervention of God in His creation.

In addition, the New Testament records many miracles that Christ performed during His three year ministry. The fact that Jesus clearly demonstrated miraculous control over nature is not up for debate as even His enemies recognized His powers. After Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, John records the following in chapter 11:47 of his gospel: "Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, 'What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs.'"

Finally, Jesus historical and evidential resurrection from the dead is the quintessential proof-point of God performing miracles on earth. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up", Jesus said in John 3:19. After all the evidence for the resurrection is examined, it is simply far easier to believe that Christ came back from dead than to believe that anything else occurred.

A God Who Cares

Deism's god is one that generally has no concern for mankind, and one who may or may not offer anything beyond an earthly existence. By contrast, Jesus' very presence on earth refutes deism just as Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 4:6: "For God, who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness,' is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." Jesus was sent from the Father to earth and showed extraordinary acts of loving-kindness to all who encountered Him.

Of course, the most incredible act of love ever shown was Jesus' acceptance of the cross and His sacrifice for those who unmistakably did not deserve His mercy. Just as Paul clearly articulates in Romans 5:8, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." The identity of the real Jesus refutes deism, is supported by the weight of Scripture, and offers far more than an unknowable deity ever could.

As has been shown, the true identity of Jesus is absolutely critical as demonstrated from Christ's own words, is necessary to repair and maintain the relationship between God and man, and refutes heretical teachings such as deism. It is not surprising, therefore, to find the enemy of mankind working hard to distort the real identity of Jesus into something other than it really is.

⁴ Norman Geisler, "Deism" in *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: 1999), 189-192.

The World's Worst Case of Identity Theft

One of the most feared personal injustices in modern times is identity theft. This involves a thief stealing personal documents from another person that allows them to impersonate the victim in various ways, most often through the purchasing of goods and services. The damage can usually be limited in that the victim is oftentimes not held responsible for the unlawful spending on the part of the thief as long as it is caught and noticed within a reasonable amount of time.

Without question, the worst case of identity theft recorded in history is Satan stealing the real identity of Christ and portraying Him in counterfeit ways through the teachings of various cults, false religions, and secular manglings of Jesus. How does Satan accomplish this? Good salesmen know that one of the most important tasks in any serious engagement with a potential customer is to get the hopeful convert to change their opinions and beliefs to those that conform to the concept of what the salesman is selling.⁵ Once this is done, the actual sale is inevitable.

It can easily be argued that the hat Satan wears most is that of a salesman. In his pursuit of mankind, the devil works hard to spin distortions of God's truth so that the beliefs of those he engages are altered to be false. Once the sale is complete, the eternal destiny of the one deceived matches that of the salesman. Perhaps the most frightening and sad verse in all the Bible is Matthew 15:14 where Jesus, describing the Pharisees, says "Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit." Jesus states that both the deceiver *and* the deceived fall into destruction, which is a very tragic end result for those who are victims of spiritual deception. Unlike traditional identity theft that affects the one whose identity is stolen, Satan's identity theft of Jesus produces eternal consequences for others who follow his fake Christ.

This being the case, it is not surprising that one of the things that all cults and false religions sell is a false Jesus. The enemy knows that a counterfeit Christ cannot save any soul and so he markets one that is anything but the real Jesus proclaimed in Scripture. In particular, as has already been stated, all cults and false religions deny that Jesus is God. Whether it is a cult like the Jehovah's Witnesses who present a Messiah that is a created being, or a false religion such as Islam that denies Jesus' divinity and places Him among other human prophets, the actual identity of Christ is cloaked behind a counterfeit exterior that is devoid of true saving power.

The True Identity of Christ Restored

To prove that the Bible clearly depicts Jesus as God, one should use points 7-9 of Norman Geisler's 12 apologetic points that show Christianity is true:

7. The New Testament Documents Proclaim Jesus to be God
8. Jesus is Miraculously Proven to be God
9. Therefore, Jesus is God⁶

There is no need to use points one through six of Dr. Geisler's apologetic system as most cults like the Jehovah's Witnesses do believe in a theistic God who can work miracles, and they do believe the original New Testament documents to be accurate in terms of correctly recording events that happened. In

⁵ Steve W. Martin, *Heavy Hitter Selling* (Rancho Santa Margarita, CA: Sand Hill Publishing, 2004), v.

⁶ Norman Geisler, "Apologetics, Argument of" in *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 36-7.

addition, Muslims also acknowledge that God can act through miracles, although they deny the doctrine of biblical inerrancy.

With respect to the Bible, there is overwhelming evidence in the New Testament that Jesus considered Himself to be God, as did the writers who faithfully recorded His words and early Church events. This can be demonstrated by three lines of evidence:

1. Christ's very words
2. Christ's actions
3. The testimony of the New Testament writers

Jesus said He was God

There is little doubt when a thorough investigation is made of the New Testament that Jesus spoke in a way that showed He believed Himself to be God in the flesh. There are at least two major categories of statements Christ made that prove He believed He was deity.

First, Jesus made numerous descriptive statements about Himself in the New Testament that were a direct reference to the one true God proclaimed in the Old Testament.⁷ No mere man would dare take on the descriptions God used to portray Himself in the Old Testament in the way Jesus did if He did not think Himself divine. Table 1 below lists a number of the most important parallels Christ drew of Himself and God:

Table 1
Old Testament Descriptions of God taken by Christ

God in the Old Testament	Christ's Claim in the New Testament
The Great I AM	
<p>"Then Moses said to God, "Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.' Now they may say to me, 'What is His name?' What shall I say to them?"¹⁴ God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" Exodus 3:14-15.</p>	<p>"Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am." John 8:58.</p> <p>"Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins." John 8:18.</p>

⁷ Norman Geisler and Ron Brooks, *When Skeptics Ask* (Grand Rapid, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 106.

“Listen to Me, O Jacob, even Israel whom I called; I am He, I am the first, I am also the last.”
Isaiah 48:12.

“See now that I, I am He, and there is no god besides Me;” Deuteronomy 32:39.

The Shepherd

“The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.”
Psalm 23:1.

“I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.” John 10:11.

The Light

“The LORD is my light and my salvation;
Whom shall I fear?” Psalm 27:1.

“Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, ‘I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.’” John 8:12.

Ruler of All

“For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.” Isaiah 9:6.

“And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth’”. Matthew 28:18.

The First and the Last

“Listen to Me, O Jacob, even Israel whom I

“When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead

called; I am He, I am the first, I am also the last.”

Isaiah 48:12.

man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, “Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, ¹⁸and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.” Revelation 1:17-18.

“Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done. “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.” Revelation 21:12.

The Bridegroom

For as a young man marries a virgin, so your sons will marry you; and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so your God will rejoice over you.

Isaiah 62:5.

“It will come about in that day,” declares the LORD, “That you will call Me Ishi (my husband) and will no longer call Me Baali (my master). Hosea 2:16.

“Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.” Matthew 25:1.

Judge of all Nations

“Let the nations be aroused and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat, for there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations.” Joel 3:12.

“For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son,” John 5:12.

Second, Jesus made a number of statements about Himself that were clearly understood by the audience He was addressing. For example, John records the following encounter with Jesus and a group of Jews: "But He answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working." For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God."⁸ Another confrontation occurs in John where Jesus yet again claims to be God when He says, "I and the Father are one." The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them, "I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?" The Jews answered Him, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out *to be* God."⁹

Finally, Jesus made a number of very telling statements to His disciples and others that clearly demonstrated He believed He was divine. Declarations such as "He who has seen Me has seen the Father",¹⁰ claiming the Son of Man reference from Daniel 7 during His trial,¹¹ and stating that He shared God's glory in the beginning when God says in the Old Testament that He shares His glory with no one¹² are enough to show that Jesus believed Himself to be equal with God.

Jesus Acted like God

Not only did Jesus make verbal statements about His deity, He acted in ways that no God-fearing Jew would otherwise act. For example, Jesus accepted worship some nine times in the New Testament. Never once did He stop those who worshipped him, which is in stark contrast to other episodes in the Bible where both men and angels put quick ends to attempts made to worship them.¹³

Jesus also forgave sins. Christ said "Your sins are forgiven" to both the paralytic in Mark 2 as well as the woman in Luke 7. The Pharisees, for once, made a good observation when they discussed among themselves that only God could forgive sins. Jesus, however, openly made such statements, which further demonstrates He believed He was God.

Christ also said to pray in His name. In John 16:23-24 Jesus says, "In that day you will not question Me about anything. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full."

Christ also spoke with authority as no man ever had. Unlike the prophets who preceded Him, Jesus never once prefaced his teachings or commands with a "Thus saith the Lord". He always said "I say to you . . .", because God need not reference anyone but Himself when dispensing truth.¹⁴

Finally, Jesus said that converts to Christianity be baptized in His name. In Matthew 28:19 Jesus says, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." It is interesting to note that this verse not only affirms the deity of Christ and the

⁸ John 5:13.

⁹ John 10:30-33.

¹⁰ John 14:9.

¹¹ Mark 14:61-62,

¹² Luke 9:16, John 17:5, Isaiah 42:8.

¹³ Acts 14:12, Revelation 19:9-10.

¹⁴ Rhodes, 227.

Father, but also the Holy Spirit. The word “name” is singular, yet three distinct Persons follow prefaced by “the” indicating one God that consists of three Persons – the Trinity.¹⁵

The New Testament Writers Believed Jesus to be God

The nine authors of the twenty seven books of the New Testament obviously believed Jesus to be God because they wrote as such. The writers declared Christ’s deity in two ways. First, like Jesus, they referenced a number of Old Testament descriptions of God and applied them to Christ. Four times in Titus, Paul references as Savior the names Jesus and God, and yet in Isaiah 43:11, God says there is no Savior other than Him. Paul also says in Philippians 2:11 that every knee will bow at the name of Jesus and every tongue confess that He is Lord, but God says in Isaiah 45:23, “That to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear *allegiance*”. Finally, in Revelation 1:7, John states that every eye will see the pierced Christ and will mourn over Him, which is exactly what God says about Himself in Zechariah 12:10.

Next, the New Testament writers made many new proclamations of Jesus’ deity in their writings. John includes in his gospel three of the clearest declarations of Jesus divine nature. The first verse in John says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Verse fourteen then says, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.” In the same chapter, John the Baptist is found declaring the eternality of Christ when he says, “This is He on behalf of whom I said, ‘After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.’”¹⁶ The third strong statement about Christ and God being one in the same comes in John 20:28 when Thomas, after coming face to face with the resurrected Christ, proclaims “My Lord and my God!”

Paul leaves little doubt in many of his epistles that Jesus is God. Paul states that Jesus is God over all (Romans 9:5), that He emptied Himself of being God during his incarnation (Philippians 2:5-8), that He is the creator of all things (Colossians 1:16-17, 19) including angels (demonstrating that Jesus cannot be the angel Michael), that all the fullness of deity dwells in Christ (Colossians 2:9-10), that He is King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Timothy 6:15), and that He is our God and Savior (Titus 2:13).

Finally, the other New Testament authors echoed Paul and the gospel writers that Jesus is God. Peter says that Jesus is our God and Savior (2 Peter 1:1). The writer of Hebrews provides a vertical cosmological argument for God when he says that Christ made the world and is “. . . the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power (Hebrews 1:2-3). Concerning verse three and the Jehovah’s Witnesses, Walter Martin points out “It would be illogical, and unreasonable, to suppose that Christ, who is the image imprinted by Jehovah’s *Substance*, is not of the Substance of Jehovah and hence God, or the second Person of the Triune Deity.”¹⁷ The writer of Hebrews also references the Father calling the Son God and says that His throne will be forever (Hebrews 1:8). Christ’s unchanging divine nature being is declared in chapter thirteen of the same book where Jesus is said to be the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). John rounds out the New Testament references to Christ being God when he calls Jesus the true God (1 John 5:20), and then, like Paul, calls Jesus King of kings and Lord of lords two places in Revelation (17:14, 19:16).

Does the New Testament proclaim Jesus to be God? The overwhelming evidence found in Christ’s own words, the manner in which He lived, and the testimony of the New Testament writers declares

¹⁵ Ibid, 96.

¹⁶ John 1:29.

¹⁷ Martin, 89. Emphasis in original.

“absolutely!” However, just because it can be proven that Jesus and the New Testament writers thought He was God does not mean that He is. To prove that Christ is indeed God, one needs to look at how Jesus was confirmed to be God Almighty through various miraculous events.

Jesus is Miraculously Proven to be God

Jesus was miraculously proven to be God in three distinct ways:

1. By fulfilling biblical prophecy
2. By living a miraculous and sinless life
3. By rising from the dead

Prophesied to be God in the Flesh

There are numerous Bible prophecies made in the Old Testament concerning the coming of the Messiah that were miraculously fulfilled in the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Several in particular point to the Christ being God in the flesh. Isaiah says that the virgin will give birth to a Child who will be called God with us (Isaiah 7:14). Isaiah also says that this Child will hold the titles “. . . Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father . . .” (Isaiah 9:6).

Other prophecies fulfilled in Jesus include One being born in Bethlehem whose existence has been “. . . From the days of eternity.” (Micah 5:2), and God being valued for thirty shekels of silver (Zechariah 11:13), which was the exact amount Judas betrayed Jesus for.

A Miraculous and Sinless Life

Jesus performed some thirty-five miracles in the New Testament and used these evidences to prove His identity as Messiah to John the Baptist (Matthew 11:5). In addition, Jesus lived a sinless life – something no one in the flesh has ever done – which was confirmed in the fact that his enemies could find no fault in him, nor could Pilate during His trial.

The Cornerstone Event of Christianity

Concerning the events of Jesus’ death as recorded in Scripture, the Qur’an states, "That they said (in boast), ‘We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah.’ But they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them, and those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no (certain) knowledge, but only conjecture to follow, for of surety they killed him not...." (sura 4:157). The Bible states numerous times that God raised Jesus from the dead.¹⁸ Yet in John 2:19, Jesus is found saying, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” Even when speaking of His resurrection, Christ affirmed His deity. The empty tomb proves it.

In denying His death, followers of Islam implicitly deny His resurrection, with the Qur’an saying instead, “But Allah raised him up (with his body and soul) unto Himself (and he is in the heavens). And Allah is Ever All Powerful, All Wise.”, (sura 4:158). By contrast, Jehovah’s Witnesses do not deny Christ came back from the grave, but they say He came back a “divine spirit being” that was not physical in nature. This false teaching is easily refuted by first referencing Paul, who said that the *man* Christ Jesus is our

¹⁸ Acts 2:24-32, Acts 3:15, Romans 4:24, Romans 8:11, 2 Corinthians 4:14, Galatians 1:1.

one mediator between God and mankind,¹⁹ and then the resurrected Jesus Himself who stated to His disciples, "See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have."²⁰

It is also noteworthy to point out that by denying the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, Islam makes Christ out to be a liar because He said in Luke 18:32-33, "For He will be delivered to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and mistreated and spit upon, and after they have scourged Him, they will kill Him; and the third day He will rise again." Reconciling the statements in the Qur'an about Christ's righteousness, Muhammad's own words of the trustworthiness of the Bible, and the truth of Scripture that stands in stark contrast to the Qur'an's denials of Christ's death and resurrection is a daunting task for any Muslim to undertake.

The only conclusion that can be reached after confirming Jesus fulfilled the biblical prophecies about God becoming man, that He lived a miraculous and sinless life, and that He raised Himself bodily from the grave is that His true identity is what and who the Bible proclaims Him to be – God.

Why the Identity of Jesus is Critical

Satan, being the master salesman that he is, does not care which false Christ someone eventually puts their faith in as long it is not the true Messiah presented in the Bible. He knows that one can be right about many things, but be wrong about the real Jesus and still be lost. In other words, a fake Christ produces a fake salvation that leads to a very real Hell. R.C. Lensky, a pastor, theologian and commentator has well said, "The worst forms of wickedness consist of perversions of the truth".

The Jesus presented by the cults and false religions is the enemy's false distortion of the Son of God's true identity. Whether it is the created being from the Jehovah's Witnesses, the false Christ of Islam, or a sixty-year old Puerto Rican man named Jose Luis de Jesus Miranda who thinks he's the incarnation of Jesus, the end result for their followers is the same. By rewriting or denying Scripture to support their phony Christ, and working fervently to make disciples for their faiths, the false faiths mirror the Pharisees that Jesus spoke of when He said, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves." (Matthew 23:15).

Just as people die everyday of diseases that could be completely stopped by the right medication or medical procedure, so too do people fall into eternity lost because they have failed to obtain the truth about the real Jesus and have instead followed a deceptive faith that is piloted by the father of lies. Without question, believing in Christ's true identity matters.

¹⁹ 1 Timothy 2:5.

²⁰ Luke 24:39.

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